Saint Paul Planning Commission Central Corridor Resource Center 1080 University Avenue W.

Minutes September 5, 2008

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 5, 2008, at 8:30 a.m. in the Central Corridor Resource Center.

Commissioners Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Lu, Morton; Porter, Smitten, Wencl; and

Present: Messrs. Alton, Barrera, Bellus, Commers, Goodlow, Gordon, Kramer, Margulies,

Nelson, Spaulding, and Ward.

Commissioners

Absent:

Ms. *Faricy, and Mr. *Johnson.

*Excused

Also Present: Larry Soderholm, Planning Administrator; Allan Torstenson, Donna Drummond,

Joan Trulsen, Patty Lilledahl, Penny Simison, Luis Pereira, Jessica Rosenfeld, Kate Reilly, Josh Williams, Greta Alquist, Emily Goodman, and Carol Peshman,

Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes August 22,, 2008.

MOTION: Commissioner Bellus moved approval of the minutes of August 22, 2008. Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Alton had no announcements.

III. Planning Administrator's Announcements

Larry Soderholm reported on planning-related business at the City Council.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: <u>Housing Plan</u> – Item from the Comprehensive Planning Committee. (*Luis Pereira*, 651/266-6591)

Chair Alton announced that the City of Saint Paul Planning Commission is holding a public hearing on the Housing Plan. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Legal Ledger on August 7, 2008, and was mailed to the citywide Early Notification System list of recipients and other interested parties.

Luis Pereira, PED planner, spoke about some of the similarities of the draft Housing Plan to the last Housing Plan. Similar to the last plan, there are three themes or strategies in the draft, the first being to "build on Saint Paul's strengths in the metro housing market." The second is to

"preserve and promote established neighborhoods," and the third is to "ensure the availability of affordable housing across the city." Some other similarities to the last plan are ongoing demographic changes, housing growth through redevelopment, and regulatory changes. Mr. Pereira also talked about the differences between this plan and the last housing plan. One of the chief differences is that the draft has policies that deal with threats to neighborhood vitality due to the foreclosure and vacant housing crises. The draft also has a greater focus on sustainability, energy efficiency and new housing oriented around transit. Another big emphasis in the draft plan is the fact that City/HRA housing funding is increasingly scarce, which implies that difficult choices must be made given multiple housing needs.

He outlined areas of possible controversy. These include an emphasis on aggressive housing rehabilitation, increased densities along commercial corridors, and the priority for preservation of existing affordable housing over construction of new affordable units. Another topic that has been controversial is the set of revised goals for the production of new housing units affordable to households earning low and moderate incomes. Unlike the last plan, this plan proposes having different affordable housing goals for the new production of rental and ownership units. Mr. Pereira encouraged people to contact him with questions or comments by noon on Monday, September 8, 2008. The public hearing housing plan draft is posted on the web at www.stpaul.gov/compplan.

Chair Alton read the rules of procedure for the public hearing.

The following people spoke.

- 1. Tom Dimond, 2119 Skyway Drive, Saint Paul, MN. Mr. Dimond distributed a handout, containing the points he spoke about. The first one is that economic segregation of the City or Metro area should be discouraged. Second, he believes the plan should encourage private investments in housing, which is the largest factor in maintaining strong neighborhoods—the willingness of families to purchase and make improvements to their own homes. Homeowners are more inclined to invest in their homes if they believe actions of the City will encourage others in their neighborhood to invest and maintain their homes.
 - Mr. Dimond stated that on page 8, Policy 1.4 says new housing construction anywhere in the city can be inherently more sustainable than housing constructed elsewhere in the region. Mr. Dimond suggested that the word "anywhere" be deleted and to add the sentence, "New construction in the city can also have negative impacts." He also said that on page 10, Policy 1.9(c)(4) should be deleted, because this is a questionable precedent that the state legislature is unlikely to support.
- 2. Vic Grossman spoke on behalf of the Ramsey County Chapter of MICAH, a nonprofit group of churches and synagogues engaged in public policy advocacy for affordable housing. Mr. Grossman had a handout with an attached demographic table that he referred to as he spoke. MICAH approves most of the plan, but they have three concerns or issues about the home ownership and rental goals of the plan. One issue is the apparent noncompliance with Met Council requirements of the goal for new housing production, which the draft sets at 80% of the regional median income for ownership projects. Two other concerns are that neither the home ownership or rental goals reflect short term or long term economic realities.

Based on these concerns, MICAH recommended that rental housing goals should be 20% of the AMI, or \$16,000, which is 30% of Saint Paul's median household income (a maximum monthly affordable rent of \$400), and 30% of the AMI, or \$24,500, which is 50% of Saint Paul's median income (a maximum monthly affordable rent of \$613). They also suggest that home ownership goals should be 30% of AMI, or \$23,550, which is 50% of Saint Paul's median income (a maximum monthly affordable purchase price of \$85,000), and 50% of AMI, or \$39, 250, which is 80% of Saint Paul's median income (a maximum monthly affordable purchase price of \$125,000).

Luis Pereira wanted to clarify one thing. Several people in the public may have seen a previous draft, which is slightly different from the public hearing draft presented here today. On home ownership, the home ownership goals for the city were changed at the last meeting. Instead of 30% of city-assisted new production of home ownership units being affordable at 80% of the AMI, the Housing Task Force changed the goal to 30% of city-assisted homeownership units being affordable to households at 60% of the AMI.

Chair Alton asked how was that decision made?

Mr. Pereira said that there was a proposal to amend the draft at the last Task Force meeting, and it was voted on and approved by the task force.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Bellus moved to close the public hearing, and leave the record open for written testimony submitted by noon on Monday, September 8, 2008, and to refer the matter back to the Comprehensive Planning Committee for review and recommendation. Commissioner Spaulding seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

V. Zoning Committee

NEW BUSINESS

#08-129-235 Mississippi Market (Victoria Park) – Conditional Use Permit for a retail establishment of more than 10,000 sq ft in gross floor area with variance of TN3 design standards regarding minimum door and window openings in the primary street façade (50% of length and 30% of area required; 48.3% of length and 23.8% of area proposed). 782 Hathaway Street between Perlman and Thurston. (*Kate Reilly*, 651/266-6618)

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit and variance with a condition. The motion carried on a 15-0 vote with 2 abstentions (Alton, Smitten).

VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Morton reported on their last meeting that they voted on the Critical Area building height limits for the West Side Flats. All of the Critical Area issues deriving from the Commission's public hearing during the summer of 2007 have now been acted on by the Committee, issue by issue. At the next Committee meeting, they intend to review the complete Critical Area zoning overlay package, as approved by the Committee, and recommend action on

it to the full Planning Commission.

VII. Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee

Commissioner Wencl announced the next meeting is at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 10, 2008.

VIII Communications Commission

No report.

IX. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Gordon distributed the Neighborhood STAR Board's recommendations for the 2008 large grant cycle. There was less money available this year, and the total number of applications was down. Still, the number of qualifying applicants was up, and all of them were funded. In total, there was \$1.3 million in grants, and \$1.2 million in loans, almost a 50/50 split. The STAR Board wants to do more loans because loan money generates interest, and the principle repayments that come back can then be recycled out again for additional projects.

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None

XI. New Business

None

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

In Sonja Butler's absence the meeting was recorded by Carol Peshman. Minutes prepared by:

Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary Planning and Economic Development Department, City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,	Approved	
	(Date)	
Larry Soderholm, AICP Planning Administrator	Marilyn Porter Secretary of the Planning Commission	

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